

Living in Urban Areas due for Redevelopment: Perspectives from Children and their Families

The environment in which children grow up provides an important context for their welfare and opportunities for their development and partly shapes their sense of identity. Children growing up in urban poverty often live in crowded conditions, sharing space with many family members in dilapidated houses, sometimes conducting all their daily activities in a single room without adequate kitchens, toilets or washing facilities. Although children are aware of the deprivations and hardships of life in such conditions, they also may also value aspects of their home environment, notably cohesive and supportive social relations within the home.

This summary reports on a study carried out with families in four urban communities (three in Addis Ababa and one in Hawassa, the capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region) that are due to be resettled when a planned redevelopment of these parts of the city centres starts. The study sought to understand the views of children (and their caregivers) about their living conditions prior to the impending move. These neighbourhoods are congested and tend to be unhealthy environments, with open sewerage systems and limited facilities for the disposal of liquid and solid waste. Children in these areas often do not have space to play and may be exposed to anti-social behaviour. Many poor people live in such circumstances not out of choice but for lack of other opportunities. However, there are also aspects of their neighbourhoods that people value, particularly access to informal work opportunities, markets, social relations and supportive social networks.

Background

Young Lives has been working with children in 8 urban and 12 rural communities in Ethiopia since 2002. In two of the central sites in Addis Ababa (Bertukan and Menderin)¹ and one in Hawassa (Leku), residents have been told some time ago that they would have to move. The planned redevelopment and relocation was mentioned as a concern for families during the third round of our household survey in 2009, even though the exact timing is still unknown. The fourth site, Duba, is on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Relocation does not seem to be a major concern here, but we included this site for contrast as a 'control' site to purposes of comparison. However, the main road out of town may stimulate investment, leading to some displacement.

We visited the four communities in January 2012 and interviewed 451 of the Young Lives children and 466 caregivers (almost 16% of all Young Lives children in Ethiopia and 40% of those living in urban areas). Of the 451 children, 299 (64%) are from the Younger Cohort (aged between 11 and 12 years old at the time) and 152 (36%) are from the Older Cohort (aged between 17 and 18). Of the total, 232 (51%) are girls and 219 (49%) are boys.

We also carried out in-depth interviews with 79 children and their caregivers (10 boys and 10 girls in each of the four sites). In Bertukan and Leku, which are sites where we conduct our core longitudinal qualitative research, we interviewed the children who are part of that sample (although one boy in Bertukan had moved and we were unable to trace him). In Duba and Menderin, a sub-sample was generated from the main survey sample. The selection



Photo: Alula Pankhurst

criteria included the wealth quintile of the household, home ownership, and other social categories such as religion and ethnicity, in an attempt to include a mix of different groups and equal numbers of boys and girls from both age cohorts. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from formal and customary institutions in each community. Focus group discussions were conducted in separate groups for boys and girls for each age cohort, and were also held with their caregivers and with community representatives.

The aim was to understand the views and attitudes of children and caregivers towards their home and community environment, and their expectations, fears and hopes about the plans for relocation. The three main topics of discussion were house and home environment, neighbourhood and support networks.

¹ The children and their families share a great deal of personal information with us over many years. For this reason, pseudonyms have been used – both for the children mentioned here and for their communities – to preserve anonymity.

Communities due for redevelopment

All four sites are in poor areas in either the national capital or a regional capital and they each present particular characteristics which are worth noting.

Bertukan is in the central part of Addis Ababa in an old quarter developed during the Italian occupation. It is close to a major market where many of the households find casual employment. The site is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity (Amhara and Gurage are the largest groups) and religion (with Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities included). Many Young Lives households rely on informal-sector activities, notably petty trade in the market, street vending, wage labour, the sale of food and beverages, and carpentry. There is a large proportion of female-headed households, and some of the women concerned are involved in commercial sex work, for which the area is known. Several adjacent areas have already been demolished and are being redeveloped and this neighbourhood is also within the priority areas for redevelopment. Although most of the redevelopment is earmarked for commercial interests, three blocks of condominiums have already been built in the area and about a dozen very poor families were able to obtain flats within them with the support of NGOs, although none of these was a Young Lives household.

Duba is located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa in an area that was first developed as an industrial zone in the late imperial period. The area is close to a main road and a major river, which is polluted from the nearby factories. It is less congested than the two sites in the centre of the city. The area is mixed in terms of ethnicity, with Oromo, Amhara and Silte being the major groups, and the population is predominantly Orthodox Christian. The main forms of livelihood involve wage labour in the informal sector, retail trade and street vending, and some men work in factories. There is relatively good access to health and education services. There are no immediate plans for redeveloping the area, although there has been an increase in industrial development in the vicinity and along the main road passing through the area, which may well lead to some displacement along the road. It was included as a 'control' site for comparison with the areas where relocation is expected to take place.

Menderin is in the centre of Addis Ababa in a very congested area which has a reputation of being one of the poorest parts of the city, with badly constructed make-shift dwellings. The area is polluted by open sewers and waste in the streets and air pollution from a cigarette factory. The site is mixed in terms of ethnicity with four major ethnic groups, the Amhara, Gurage, Oromo and Tigraway. The majority of the population are Orthodox Christians, although there are large Muslim and smaller Protestant minorities. There is an important market in the area. The main forms of livelihood are based on informal-sector activities, including petty trade, street vending, retail selling, woodwork and daily labour, and some residents earn wages in government or private organisations. Several adjacent areas have already been demolished and are in the process of being redeveloped, and there also some condominiums that have already been built. The area has been designated for redevelopment and the residents have been informed they will have to move.

Leku is located in an old neighbourhood in Hawassa, the capital city of SNNPR. The ethnic composition of the site is heterogeneous, with three major groups among the Young Lives sample being the Wolayta, Amhara and Oromo. There are also a few Gurage and some Tigraway and Sidama. In terms of religion the site is also mixed, with Orthodox Christians and Protestants representing the largest groups. Most people in the community are engaged in informal-sector activities, notably petty trading, daily labour, street vending, or other forms of self-employment. Children are also involved in such activities. There is a high prevalence of female-headed households. The community is considered to be very poor, and a few NGOs have been engaged in distributing aid and educational materials. Some parts of the area are expected to be demolished for renovation, although the boundaries are not yet clear.

Housing and household facilities

Most of the families living in the study sites do not own the houses in which they live, especially in the inner-city sites of Addis Ababa, where the bulk of the housing is owned by the kebele local administration. This was 94% in Bertukan, 87% in Menderin, 74% in Duba (and 59% in Leku). Despite the

poor state of their houses, the vast majority of respondents did not do any maintenance, repairs or improvements to their homes, either because they could not afford the cost or because the houses were owned by the kebele, which is in theory responsible for repairs, and they were not allowed to maintenance work on the properties.

Kitchens

About a third of the households did not have a separate kitchen, especially in the inner-city sites (49% in Bertukan and 45% in Menderin). Many do not even have a kitchen at all: they use their one sole room for everything – for sleeping, cooking and even washing clothes. These conditions make life difficult for the families, and especially for the children, and the provision of condominium housing with separate kitchens would be an important improvement. More than a third of households use charcoal and more than a quarter use wood as fuel for cooking. This has broader implications for the health and well-being of residents and for the environment, in terms of pollution and depletion of dwindling forest reserves. However, use of electricity is on the increase and in Menderin it has exceeded 40%. Nonetheless, our in-depth interviews suggest that kerosene usage is still prevalent, and that the rising cost of kerosene and the high cost of electricity are leading some households to revert to using charcoal.

Latrines

Most of the households share communal pit latrines. Only one fifth overall have their own latrine and only seven households in total have a flush toilet. Sharing of communal pit latrines is most common in the inner-city sites (89% in Bertukan, 89% in Menderin, 62% in Duba and 45% in Leku), and some respondents said that they have no option but to pay for using public toilets. In the site on the periphery of Addis Ababa, almost one fifth of the households still go out to fields to relieve themselves. The poor standards of hygiene, the smell and the shortage of toilets, which are often shared by many families, are issues mentioned by significant numbers of children as reasons for disliking their homes. The vast majority said that they did not have access to washing facilities close to the toilet, particularly in the inner-city sites (reported by 88% of all caregivers and 80% of the children). More people reported using soap to wash after using the toilet (83% of caregivers and 73% of children). This increase is sometimes attributed to the teachings of Health Extension Workers, but our evidence suggests that many adults and children do not use soap regularly, which is of particular concern in the promotion of improved sanitation and reduction of water-borne diseases.

Water supply

The situation regarding access to clean water seems better than the conditions of sanitation. More than half the households said that they had access to clean water piped to their own dwelling or yard (53% in Duba, 53% in Bertukan, 44% in Leku and 42% in Menderin). Some households reported getting piped water in their own compounds recently. The vast majority of respondents described the quality of their drinking water as good (90% in Duba, 89% in Leku, 87% in Menderin and 59% in Bertukan). The rest said the quality of water was average, and only in

one inner-city site (Bertukan) did a small proportion (7%) describe it as bad. However, one in ten households said they used public water sources, paying by the jerry-can.

Washing facilities

Although access to water may have improved, the lack of washing facilities is still a major problem. About half the children overall and two-thirds in the inner-city sites said that they wash in the living room (65% in Menderin, 65% in Bertukan, 50% in Duba and 27% in Leku), and in the site in Hawassa, one fifth wash outside the home. Overall, fewer than 10% wash in a bathroom (highest in Leku with 20%), and a higher proportion (11%) wash in the kitchen (here again the highest was in Leku with 17%). The qualitative interviews suggested that some children have to wash in spaces used by other household members or even in the compound, which infringes their privacy and is difficult for girls. Some children reported having to go to public baths and pay for showers.

Waste management

The management of solid waste seems to have improved, as respondents in all the sites and most households reported that it is collected at regular intervals. However, the neighbourhood is still often polluted, especially in the two inner-city sites in Addis Ababa, and smelly and dirty streets ranked first in the aspects that children and caregivers disliked about their environment. Disposal of liquid waste has been posing a problem in all the sites, especially in the inner-cities, where there are only open drainage ditches, to which some households connect their sewerage. The proportion of households disposing of liquid waste in a channel was high in the two inner city sites in Addis Ababa (Bertukan 98% and Menderin 63%). However, in Bertukan conditions had improved as the open channels have been closed over, and in two sites respondents mentioned digging pits to dispose of waste, following instructions by Health Extension Workers. The sanitation problems deserve further attention, especially given the increased emphasis given to disease prevention within the health system.

Views of children about their homes

What children like about their homes

What children said they liked mainly concerned their relationships at home – a nice family atmosphere (i.e. good quality of relationships), spending time with parents, eating with family and spending time with siblings. Children in all the sites were generally very positive and the site in Hawassa had the highest proportion of positive responses in all the four things mentioned, which suggests cohesive social relations among recent migrants, while the site on the periphery of Addis Ababa had the lowest proportion (except for 'nice family atmosphere').

What children dislike about their homes

In terms of things that children disliked, more than half of them mentioned having to use a dirty toilet or not having a toilet at all. Sharing rooms was mentioned by just under a quarter, family disputes by one fifth, and lack of privacy by just under a fifth. Sharing a bed and having a lodger were mentioned by only a few children. There were some differences between sites, with dirty toilets or no toilets mentioned by more than 70% of children in Menderin, 55% in Duba, 53% in Leku and 50% in Bertukan. Lack of toilets was mentioned by a fifth of children in the site on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Lack of privacy was highest in the site in Hawassa, mentioned by more than a quarter of children. Qualitative interviews also revealed problems relating to the lack of kitchens, or the need to share kitchens, and the lack of compounds in which to play.

Views of children and families about their neighbourhood

Aspects children like about their neighbourhoods

Meeting friends (81% overall) and being close to family and friends (69% overall) were the aspects that children liked most about their communities. In third place came the presence of religious institutions (mentioned by 68% of the children overall), then their school (63% overall). Fewer than half the children mentioned the market, while more than a third mentioned cafés and less than 10% mentioned youth clubs or social institutions such as funeral or socio-religious organisations. The site in Hawassa scored most highly in respect of five aspects that children liked: meeting friends, being close to family and friends, the church/the mosque, the school and the *mehaber*, a pattern which suggests cohesive social relations within the neighbourhood. Two of the highest proportions of positive responses were recorded in Menderin, related to the market and the cafés, which can be explained by the bustling market context. Bertukan, also an inner-city site, and Duba, on the outskirts, each scored highly (for the youth club and the *iddir* respectively). Duba had the lowest proportions of positive responses in six out of the nine aspects, which suggests less strong neighbourhood relations. The findings indicate that the children in the site in Hawassa have more reasons to like their neighbourhood than the children in Addis Ababa, while the lowest proportions of positive responses were recorded from children in Duba, on the periphery of Addis Ababa.

Aspects caregivers like about their neighbourhoods

Caregivers valued most highly the presence of neighbours, access to shops, friends and family, and access to education: all mentioned by more than three-quarters of respondents. More than half the caregivers valued safety at night, although only 39% mentioned this in Bertukan.

Access to work was mentioned by 41% overall. Just over a quarter of caregivers mentioned cafés, but more than a fifth mentioned socio-religious associations and a fifth mentioned kebele recreation centres (cited by almost half of the respondents in Menderin). Bars and *iqqub* credit associations were mentioned the least, the former being relatively more important in Menderin and the latter more important in the Hawassa site.

Aspects children dislike about their neighbourhoods

Among the aspects that children said made them dislike their neighbourhood, smelly and dirty streets were the most important (58% and 57% overall but mentioned more by children in the two inner-city sites). In Menderin 77% of children mentioned smell and 76% said they disliked the dirty streets; while in Bertukan this was 73% and 71% respectively. Lack of recreation opportunities was mentioned by almost half the children, and more children mentioned noise pollution than air or river pollution. Exposure to bad habits was mentioned by 30% of children (41% in Menderin). Crowding was mentioned by 28% (a figure that was as high as 45% in Menderin and one third in Bertukan). The presence of commercial sex work was mentioned by 15% of children, although more than a third mentioned this in the Hawassa site and a fifth in Menderin.

Most of the aspects mentioned by children that made them dislike their neighbourhood, including smell and dirt in the streets, being unsafe at night and during the day, living in a crowded area, exposure to bad habits, and air and river pollution, were mentioned by the highest proportion in Menderin, one of the poorest areas in Addis Ababa. Bertukan, the other inner-city site, had the second highest proportions of children who said they disliked their neighbourhood due to smelly streets and dirty streets or because they felt unsafe at night, were exposed to bad influences or disliked the crowded neighbourhood, the air and river pollution. The site in Hawassa had the highest proportion of respondents complaining about noise pollution and the presence of commercial sex work. Duba, on the periphery of Addis Ababa, scored badly only for lack of recreation. Otherwise this site consistently scored better than the others except for smell in the streets and dirty streets, although Duba was the best for this. The findings suggest a clear difference between the inner-city sites, where children expressed stronger dislike of aspects of their neighbourhood, and the outskirts.

Aspects caregivers dislike about their neighbourhoods

Smelly and dirty streets also ranked highest for things adults dislike about their living environment (with 57% and 55% overall respectively). On the other hand, crowded living conditions came third, mentioned by half the caregivers, with much higher proportions in the inner-city sites: 72%

in Menderin and 62% in Bertukan. More tellingly, half the caregivers thought that their neighbourhoods were bad places for bringing up children, again with higher proportions in Bertukan (68%) and Menderin (63%). Unlike the children, the caregivers disliked air pollution more than noise pollution, and river pollution was mentioned by lower proportions, as with the children. Other serious concerns were theft (mentioned by 41% overall), drunken behaviour (30% overall), dangerous or unsafe environments and street fighting (about a quarter for each overall). Commercial sex work came last, with very slightly higher proportions of caregivers than children seeing this as a problem. However, the concern about commercial sex work was the highest in Leku followed by Menderin for both the caregivers and the children.

Social networks and support

Social networks for children

Most children said they met with their friends at school (37%) or in the streets (27% overall), with smaller proportions meeting in their homes (22%). One fifth of the children belonged to school clubs and religious groups and about one tenth to sports and anti-HIV/AIDS clubs. The in-depth interviews also revealed that participation in a variety of school clubs is quite common, including sports, arts, music, civics and ethics, science, health, the Red Cross, anti-HIV/AIDS, peace and security, child rights or girls' clubs, scouts and 'student parliaments'. Very few children reported being involved in political associations such as Youth Leagues. Some were members of Orthodox Christian or Muslim *mehaber* religious associations, although none was involved directly in *iddir* funeral associations.

Social networks for caregivers

Membership of *iddir* funeral groups was very important for about 90% of caregivers. Some households have both male and female *iddir* members and some households belong to several *iddirs*. Although the proportions were much less significant, one fifth of caregivers belonged to women's associations or leagues, 16% to *mehaber* socio-religious groups, 12% to *iqqub* credit groups, and only 8% to political groups. In the qualitative survey, some caregivers expressed worries that they could no longer afford to save money with the *iqqub*, due to inflation. A few caregivers were involved in political associations such as the women's association or league or the ruling Party.

Social support for children

Asked whom they would contact first when faced with problems, most children mentioned their mother (81%) rather than their father (54%), and just over a third mentioned older siblings. After mothers, teachers were the second most important contact, mentioned by 60% of children, and friends were also important, with 39%

mentioning male friends and 36% mentioning female friends. The Hawassa site had the highest proportions, suggesting stronger cohesive social relations. Similarly, if they need a loan, children are most likely to go to their mother (31%) than to their father (ranked fourth with 15% overall), and to friends rather than siblings. Only 10% said they would go to a shopkeeper. More than 90% said they did not have debts and those who did had borrowed mainly from friends and from their mothers. Our in-depth interviews showed some children were taking loans from neighbours, friends or shops for various purposes, including to buy food, school equipment and football kit.

Importance of relations to children

In terms of relations, parents were considered as very important by 95% of all children, family was mentioned by 80% and siblings by 77% of them. Friends, neighbours and religious organisations were seen as less important. School and religion were regarded as the most important institutions in children's lives, mentioned by more than 80% of them, and half the children said that work was very important, whereas leisure time or helping others were seen as less important (43% and 39% respectively).

Support received by families

The proportion of children saying that they received support from other people was relatively small, and most sources were individuals. A third of children said that they received support from relatives, mainly family members living close by, although 7% reported support from relatives living abroad. About 18% said they received support from friends and 13% from neighbours. Ten per cent received support from a parent living away from home and 7% from a sibling who had already left home. About 8% of caregivers mentioned receiving support from associations, mostly from NGOs and *iddir* funeral associations, and a few received support from *mehaber* religious groups, *iqqub* credit groups, women's associations/leagues or from government-funded assistance programmes.

The site in Hawassa had the highest proportions of people receiving support from other sources, again suggesting stronger support relationships in this site, which has large proportions of migrants. Respondents living in Duba on the outskirts of Addis Ababa received the least support, suggesting less cohesiveness. Our interviews also revealed some cases of support from different sources. A few NGOs provided school materials, clothing and food. Migrant parents living abroad sent cash, clothing or gifts. Children also received support from siblings and uncles, from divorced parents, and from their father or other relatives living elsewhere in the country. A few children complained about having no source of support, and a couple said that they had had to work when their mothers lost their jobs. Some families received remittances from parents who had gone to the Gulf or other Arab countries such as Lebanon,

as well as Australia, Greece, Sudan and the USA. Support was sent in the form of cash or gifts such as clothing and mobile phones. Caregivers also mentioned receiving support from neighbours, close friends and other relatives living close by. Smaller proportions mentioned support from parents and children living away, from work colleagues, from members of religious groups, and from other relatives or close friends living in further away. A few mentioned receiving charity from unrelated people who provided clothing, food and other goods.

Support to others

Asked if they provided help to others, caregivers said that they mainly gave support to neighbours and close friends living nearby (17% and 14% overall respectively). For the rest, the proportions were under 10%, with the highest being for work colleagues and relatives (7% each). Here again, the site in Hawassa had the highest proportions and Duba had the lowest proportions in almost all categories, suggesting a pattern similar to that for support received. The interviews suggest that a few households are able to provide support to others, such as grandmothers, siblings living with them, children of relatives or neighbours, especially if orphaned, to neighbours, and to relatives in the countryside or visiting. A few households said they only gave help to beggars and some commented that they were too poor to help

anyone else, or that the increased cost of living is making it impossible to offer help to others.

The social networks and forms of support mentioned here, notably the support from remittances by migrants and assistance to poor children given by NGOs, are important aspects which enable poor households and the children living within them to cope with the challenges of living in urban poverty.

Conclusion

Resettlement and relocation from the areas in which the children and their families have been living could bring about improvements in their housing and neighbourhood if they can move into better housing. However, this will depend in part on where they will be relocated, whether they will be able to afford condominium housing, and what services and opportunities for work are available. The move is also likely to have an impact on their social relations and require them to adapt to a new social environment. Family relations and school conditions are likely to be crucial for children and caregivers will need to rebuild social networks. Funeral, religious and credit associations can be expected to play a key role in their successful adaptation.

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